

## DEAD TO RIGHTS

when i would launch into an extended  
(was i capable of shorter lengths?)  
speech of praise for her or one  
of the kids, the ex would listen,  
head turned aside, to the introduction,  
then before the middle of the middle,  
ask: "OK, when does the 'but' come in?"

i insisted she was wrong,  
but she wasn't.

## A CLASSIC

i was in the heat of a mickey spillane novel  
i had assigned as an example of slop fiction  
when War and Peace, the endless Russian version,  
showed up on educational TV.

i tried but could only suffer  
with count vronsky and natasha  
no longer than an hour;  
they still had eight to go  
when i returned to follow mike the hammer  
as he nailed his girls and goons.

luckily, i was alone; such sins  
are best committed in the dark.

-- Charles Stetler

Long Beach CA

## PURPLE

I drink wine all night long  
and in the morning  
when I go to the bathroom  
my lips are purple  
from the petite sirah  
and I wash my lips once  
dry them



and they are still a light  
purple  
and I wash them again  
go back to the bedroom  
the phone rings  
it's only 9:30 a.m.

I answer the phone  
a woman asks,  
"is this the sales division  
of GM?"  
I tell her that it isn't  
hang up.

the phone rings again:  
"is Gabriel Newhart there?"  
the man asks.

"I've been telling you  
people for 3 years  
there's no Gabriel Newhart  
here."

"thank you, sir," he says  
and hangs up.

the bill collectors never  
stop hunting.

I go back to bed.

"god damned telephone,"  
says Linda,  
"never stops ringing."

#### FUN TIMES

Harold was always scared.  
he was easy.  
we had a good time with  
Harold.

we hung him 4 or 5 times  
a week.

we had this rope and we'd  
get him on the back porch  
of Mrs. Keller's place.  
there was this overhanging  
rafter.